



## ***The Enlisted Perspective***

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### **Wear Testing a New Utility Uniform**

There are many things that set airmen apart from the private sector of our great nation; one of the more obvious is the uniform. Airmen take pride in wearing the uniform well, and presenting a professional appearance to each other, sister services, and to the public.

Because our uniform is a source of great pride, changes can sometimes make us uneasy. That's why we're taking great care in the design and wear test of a new utility uniform to replace the current Battle Dress Uniform.

The need for a distinctive Air Force Utility Uniform stems from years of feedback from the field on our current BDUs. Airmen through the years have complained of poor fit, the desire for better material, more functionality and more distinction from other services. The timing is right: our current uniform is supplied through Army sources, and as the Army looks at its own uniform and makes changes that suit their mission, it follows that we establish a source that can provide us with a uniform specifically designed to meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century airmen.

Let me assure you that this is not change for the sake of change. It is a well-thought out proposal that will now go to the field in a wear test for your feedback. Early in '04, 300 airmen at nine test bases throughout the Air Force will wear the uniform and give feedback on its fit, durability, comfort, and functionality.

We want your feedback as well—not shoot-from-the-hip feedback, but feedback that comes from seeing the uniform in action, and thinking about how it will meet your needs based on your work environment. A website will be available that will provide a forum to capture comments and suggestions. We will use these comments in addition to the feedback from the test participants in our final decision about this uniform.

One of the great strengths of our Air Force and its airmen is the ability to adapt to new missions, new technologies, and an ever changing world landscape; this new utility uniform is another example of seeing a need for improvement and moving forward. I believe it's a uniform fitting of the world's greatest expeditionary Air Force, and one that, if implemented, we will be proud to wear.



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